

## Plan allows airport project to fly

By HARRY EAGAR, Staff Writer

Saturday, February 19, 2005 8:50 AM

KAHULUI – On Tuesday, the Airports Division will go to the Maui Planning Commission to restart the process of improving cargo handling and intercepting alien pests at Kahului Airport.

The \$24 million program was welcomed by Don Reeser, superintendent of Haleakala National Park.

“We’re very supportive,” Reeser said Friday.

The Alien Species Inspection Facility was demanded years ago when the master environmental impact statement for the airport was prepared.

That master plan included a controversial proposal to lengthen the runway, but the current proposed developments avoid controversy.

The proposal has five parts:

? A 7,400-square-foot Alien Species Inspection Facility. Arriving cargo containers will be moved into this closed building for inspection.

One thing that alarms environmentalists is that cargo bins currently are opened on the bare pavement and, as Teya Penniman, manager of the Maui Invasive Species Committee, puts it, “anything can fly out.”

Or crawl out, in the case of the dreaded brown tree snake.

? A 36,000-square-foot cargo building, to replace the overcrowded and inconveniently located facility built in 1983.

This will have a new access road, which will eliminate some commercial traffic from the main airport driveway to the Kahului passenger terminal.

? A 38,000-square-yard general purpose aircraft apron. With the airport setting records every few months for the number of weekly jet operations – now around 180 at peak periods – the planes need more space.

? A fuel storage facility site. The state will provide the infrastructure, the fuel users would later construct whatever facilities they want.

? A new apron for the alien species and cargo buildings, and more parking for aircraft.

The Airports Division applied to the county for a special management area permit a year ago, but a petition to intervene from the Kahului Airport Coalition led to a year of negotiations.

Marsha Wienert, the state tourism liaison, said two significant changes came from the talks with the coalition, which was made up of Gregory Westcott, Masako Cordray and Dana Naone Hall.

First, an interim alien containment facility will be provided for in the old cargo building during construction of the permanent building, which could be completed in about two years.

Second, there will be a large increase in state agricultural inspectors, 14 people and three dogs provided by the state Department of Agriculture. Now, there is one dog, who works for the federal Department of Agriculture, which inspects cargo headed out of the island.

Lawyer Isaac Hall, who represented the coalition, said his clients were happy with what the state agreed to put in. As part of a settlement agreement, the petition to intervene will be withdrawn Tuesday.

The area involved is less than nine acres, part already urban.

Part of the project area is in the state agricultural zone. So that portion of the project will require a Land Use Commission boundary amendment, a community plan amendment to airport, rezoning to airport and a special management area permit.

Since the area involved is less than 15 acres, the planning commission will process the LUC application.

The construction will have the effect of extending the airport terminal on its Kahului end. That end of the passenger terminal is also being rebuilt to accommodate demand for more counters and other facilities.

The work will require realignment of part of the Old Haleakala Highway, and the construction work will interfere with Aalele Street, which is the short way to the terminal parking lot for drivers on Haleakala Highway.

Wienert said arrangements are being made to keep the highway and the street open at all times, though there will be some traffic delays due to construction.

The fuel storage site, across Keolani Place from the airport (in the rental car area), will address a Federal Aviation Administration complaint.

In the old days, when there were no transpacific flights from Maui, little refueling was done at Kahului.

Even when the major airlines began booking direct flights to the Mainland, the biggest planes could not take off fully loaded from Kahului's short runway, making a refueling stop at Honolulu mandatory.

The introduction of longer-legged medium size jets, like the Boeing 757, meant more direct Maui departures to the Mainland and required more fueling here.

The former arrangement, which had fuel trucks crossing the main runway, was declared unsafe. A temporary fix was devised, but building a tank farm will allow airlines to run pipelines direct to fueling stands, and fuel trucks will be retired.

Wienert says the fuel users and distributors probably will form a consortium to build and manage the fuel system, as they have at other state airports.

The alien species containment building has been needed for years, Wienert acknowledged. "I was very pleased with the cooperation we saw" in the negotiations with the interveners, she said.

Penniman of MISC, which manages alien species control programs that cost millions of dollars, said the containment facility "is so important. Until we spend more money and resources on prevention, we'll always be cleaning up after."

Brian Sekiguchi, the deputy transportation director who heads the Airports Division, says it is important to move now, because \$15 million in federal airport funds start lapsing later this year.

The state contribution, \$9 million, will draw on the airports capital improvements fund, which comes from user fees and concessions, including the duty free shopping contract.

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